



**CONVENTION ON  
MIGRATORY  
SPECIES**

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14<sup>th</sup> MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES  
Samarkand, Uzbekistan, 23 - 28 October 2023  
Agenda Item 29.4

**AFRICAN ELEPHANT**

*(Prepared by the Secretariat)*

Summary:

This document reports on the implementation of Decisions 13.99 - 13.100 and recommends their deletion.

## AFRICAN ELEPHANT

### Background

1. The Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (West African Elephant MOU) was concluded in 2005 and has been signed by all 13 countries that fall within the agreed regional scope.<sup>1</sup> The MOU was aimed at addressing the dire status of elephant populations in West Africa: the subregion lost more than 90 per cent of its elephant range during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and by 2005 most of the remaining elephant populations in West Africa were small and isolated. The MOU sought to address conservation challenges common to all of the Range States in the West African region.
2. Since 2005, only limited resources have been available to support implementation of the MOU as envisaged. A detailed description on the evolution of the MOU can be found in [UNEP/CMS/WAE/MOS3/Doc.5](#).
3. In the meantime, African Elephant Range States came together to develop the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP 2010), which was consensually agreed in the margins of CITES COP15 in 2010. To support its implementation, the African Elephant Fund (AEF) was established, administered by UNEP. In 2017, CMS COP12 endorsed the AEAP through [Resolution 12.19 Endorsement of the African Elephant Action Plan](#) as the principal strategy for elephant conservation under CMS. The CMS Secretariat holds an *ex officio* role on the Steering Committee of the AEF.
4. At its 13<sup>th</sup> meeting, the Conference of the Parties (COP13) adopted Decisions 13.99 and 13.100:

**13.99 Directed to the Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (West African Elephant MOU)**

*The Signatories of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (West African Elephant MOU) are encouraged to consider replacing their Work Programme with the African Elephant Action Plan (AEAP) and to implement the MOU through the AEAP and the African Elephant Fund structure. The Signatories of this MOU are encouraged to meet and decide on the future of this MOU.*

**13.100 Directed to the Secretariat**

*Subject to external resources, the Secretariat shall:*

*Facilitate communication among the Signatories of the West African Elephant MOU, in order to allow their discussions and conclusions.*

### Implementation of Decisions 13.99 and 13.100

5. The Secretariat, with funding from the Government of Germany, organized the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the Signatories (MOS3) to the West African Elephant MOU through an online platform on 30 November and 1 December 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone, Togo.

6. The meeting was attended by delegates from Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo, as well as by representatives of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) and Fauna & Flora International. Also in attendance, was the CMS Ambassador for Migratory Species, Mr. Ian Redmond.
7. IUCN provided an overview of the conservation status of West African Elephant populations. It also presented the genetic, ecological, behavioural, reproductive and other data that supported their conclusion that African Elephants should fall into two distinct species. Earlier that year, on 25 March 2021, IUCN announced that it now recognized *L. africana* (Savannah Elephant) and *L. cyclotis* (Forest Elephant) as two distinct species of the genus *Loxodonta*. IUCN shared the revised assessment of the conservation status of African Elephants, which concluded that *L. cyclotis* was 'Critically Endangered' and *L. africana* was 'Endangered'.
8. The Signatories considered document [UNEP/CMS/WAE/MOS3/Doc.5](#) 'Future of the Memorandum of Understanding concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*)'. The document provided a summary of policy developments and proposed three alternative options for the future of the MOU:
  - Option A. Termination of the MOU – the MOU would no longer exist.
  - Option B. Amendment of the MOU – Signatories could adopt the AEAP as the core strategy for African Elephant conservation under the MOU, replacing the Medium-Term International Work Programme concerning Conservation Measures for the West African Populations of the African Elephant (*Loxodonta africana*) 2012-2014, and implementing the AEAP and the African Elephant Fund structure.
  - Option C. Maintaining the status quo – the MOU would remain in force unchanged.
9. The Signatories discussed the three options and arrived at a consensus decision in support of Option B. The meeting report contained in document [UNEP/CMS/WAE/MOS3/Report](#) was unanimously adopted.
10. In addition, the MOU was amended to confirm that, subject to the availability of resources, Signatories will implement the provisions of the AEAP as the basis for conserving all populations of the species in West Africa, with a focus on conserving transboundary populations and prioritizing the implementation of transboundary conservation activities through the development of projects and fundraising proposals. The Signatories also agreed that the MOU would recognize the African Elephant as two distinct species, as identified by IUCN.
11. The amendments were supported and accepted by all of the Signatories through an electronic approval process and the [amended MOU](#) is now in force.
12. The Secretariat will continue supporting the implementation of the MOU as well as the implementation of the AEAP, as mandated by CMS Resolution 12.9, including through fundraising. To this end, the Secretariat received funding from the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland to develop a project proposal for the conservation of Forest Elephants in West Africa.

Recommended Actions:

13. The Conference of the Parties is recommended to:
  - a) Delete Decisions 13.99 and 13.100.